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G. K. GOKHALE

A SKETCH OF HIS LIFE AND CAREER

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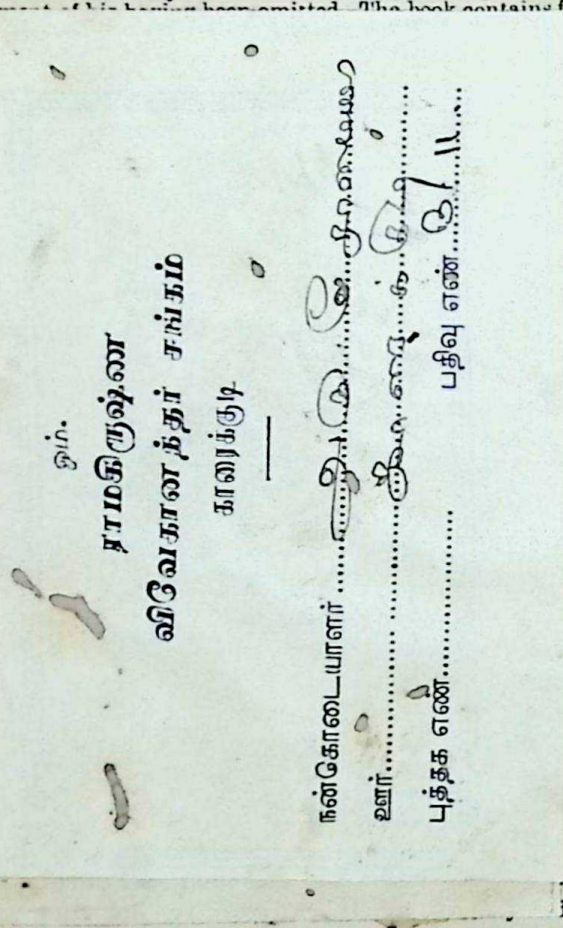

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G. K. GOKHALE.

A SKETCH.

MR. GOKHALE was a Maratha Brahmin and thus belonged to a class of people who are not in the good books of Anglo-Indians. But the Maharashtra, the country of the Marathas and the origin and centre of the Maratha supremacy in the 18th century, has produced some of the finest intellects, the noblest minds and stoutest hearts in India. Though the last to pass under British rule, the people were soon reconciled to the change and came to appreciate the benefits of that rule. But the intellects of Maharashtra showed a vigour and a pow[illegible] f independent thought that were rare elsew[illegible]e and thus created against them a prejudi[illegible] which has not disappeared even to-day They perceived the urgent need of reform in various directions and started institutions for the purpose of preparing the people for progress—institutions based on the foundation of self-sacrifice and public spirit. Among these institutions typical of Maharashtra, the

Kovilpur Academy

Deccan Education Society of Poona, the centre of Mahratta patriotic activities, takes a very high rank. It was in 1879 that a few enthusiastic young men like the late Mr. V. K. Chiplunkar, the late Mr. M. B. Namjoshi, the late Mr. G. G. Agarkar, and Mr. B. G. Tilak, with the advice and approval of leading people like Mr. Mandlik and Mr. Ranade, started the New English School at Poona with the object of cheapening and facilitating education and making it available for all classes by opening schools and colleges under private management. That small seed steadily grew into a large tree under whose genial shade thousands of young men are comfortably drinking at the inspiring fountain of education. The Deccan Education Society, established in 1884 to give a regular shape to this educational activity, is a unique institution in India. The Life Members, those who conduct the Fergusson College, the schools and other institutions of the Society, bind themselves to serve for a period of 20 years on a small salary which is but a subsistence allowance. Their sacrifice has enabled them to develop the educational institutions under their charge to such an extent that no less than 3,600 pupils are to-day receiving their education in the college and schools of the D. E. Society.

Koviloor Acadamy

Mr. Gokhale was born at Kolhapur in 1866 of poor parents. He passed his Intermediate Examination from the local college and prosecuted his further studies partly at the Elphinstone College, Bombay, and partly at the Deccan College, Poona. He graduated in 1884 and immediately joined the D. E. Society as a Life Member. Fergusson College was opened on the second day of the year 1885, and Mr. Gokhale was soon called upon to lecture to college classes on English Literature and Mathematics. As a lecturer he made his mark, and his success was not a little due to his hard work and powerful memory. History and Political Economy had, however, great fascination for him, and it was in these subjects that he greatly shone. His command of English, his masterly manner of putting things before his students and his fine grasp of the subjects he expounded, attracted crowded classes, and his students even now remember how charmed they were by his splendid exposition and eloquence. So long as he was connected with the D. E. Society, he was a tower of strength to it and worked hard to develop Fergusson College and its sister institutions.

Life Members of the D. E. Society are not merely teachers or professors as people outside suppose. Besides doing the teaching

Koviloor Acadamy

work which falls to his share, each Life Member has to take part in the work of organisation, expansion, and management of the growing institutions of the Society. He has to go about collecting funds, and is responsible, along with his colleagues, for the proper administration of the funds and the conduct and control of the college and schools. Mr. Gokhale's period of Life Membership was certainly an excellent training for the wider public life on which he formally entered on his retirement. We say formally, because even while a Life Member, he had been devoting his time and energies to very useful public work in the political and other spheres. But the years he had devoted to the cause of the D. E. Society as a young man had left a profound impression upon his mind. The lesson taught by this experience *viz.*, that a band of enthusiastic young men, animated by a desire to serve their country and fortified by self-sacrifice, can achieve success in promoting public good, encouraged Mr. Gokhale only three years after his retirement from the D. E. Society to start a new institution working on the same principle of sacrifice but having a wider sphere of activities—*viz.*, the Servants of India Society. The two institutions are situated near each other on fine sites on the outskirts of Poona and, animated with

Koviloor Acadamy

the same spirit, are the admiration and the hope of the whole country.

Mr. Ranade, the maker of Maharashtra as he has been called, was the source of the inspiration which led to a general upheaval in the Deccan and outside more than forty years ago, and Poona became the centre of the public activities almost all of which were guided by that master-mind. The *Sarvajanik Sabha* of Poona was one among the several institutions which were doing public work, and Mr. Ranade's influence had not a little to do with its popularity and success. We have already said that that great man of Poona had the faculty of attracting and attaching to himself men of various types and of making them put forth their best in the service of the country. Mr. Gokhale was one among the young men who were drawn into Mr. Ranade's orbit and under that great man began his training for public life. Naturally possessed of rare capacity, aptitude, and energy, he utilized to the full the opportunity thus obtained and his progress was rapid. In 1887 Mr. Gokhale became editor of the quarterly journal of the *Sarvajanik Sabha*, which was remarkable for its intelligent, throughing-going and outspoken discussion of the important public questions of the day and its capable representation of the popular attitude towards them.

Koviloor Acadamy

Mr. Gokhale studied under the eye of the master and was not ashamed of being a subaltern. This was largely the secret of his success. His devotion to Mr. Ranade was almost religious and his regard for another great leader was avowed not many years ago when he said that he would rather be in the wrong with Sir Pherozeshah Mehta than in the right with any one else.

One point that must be noted here is that it was not only habits of assiduous study and a firm grasp of public questions that he owed to his association with Mr. Ranade; he picked up something still more valuable, *viz.*, moral fervour, spiritual elevation, wide sympathies and liberal principles. He was a thorough believer in moral and social reform and the development of character as the foundation of national progress, and he held strongly that if India is to rise from her present position we must advance socially and morally as much as politically and economically. Mr. Gokhale was for some years one of the editors of an Anglo-Marathi Weekly of Poona named the *Sudharak* or Reformer and was thus associated in the work of one of the boldest, sincerest and ablest of reformers in the Deccan, *viz.*, the late Principal Agarkar. He was likewise Secretary to the Bombay Provincial Confer-

Koviloor Acadamy

ence for four years and to the Indian National Congress when it met in Poona in 1895. That session was remarkable for an exhibition of what has become notorious as Poona politics, a bitter taste of which the whole country obtained at Surat in 1907. The opposition of the reactionaries was mainly factious and personal. They kicked up a great row but under the wise guidance of Mr. Ranade both the Congress and the Social Conference were safely piloted to the port. But the fiend of factious zeal and reaction had been roused, and the friends of liberalism and moderation in Poona had to found a new political association of their own, *viz.*, the *Deccan Sabha* of which Mr. Gokhale became Secretary.

In 1897, Mr. Gokhale was called upon to give evidence before the Royal Commission on Indian Expenditure presided over by Lord Welby. It was an ordeal before which any man in Mr. Gokhale's position would have quaked. Thanks, however, to the splendid mastery he had won by hard labour over his favourite subject, the young Professor from the Fergusson College faced the fire of cross-examination in the most creditable manner and added a new feather to his cap.

For two years, 1900 and 1901, Mr. Gokhale was an elected member of the

Koviloor Acadamy

Bombay Legislative Council, and while there, he gave a foretaste of the splendid work he achieved in a higher sphere as a critic of the policy and measures of Government. His speeches in the Council were remarkable for their knowledge and outspokenness and Mr. Gokhale's tenure of the councillorship of the Bombay Legislature will be remembered for the vigorous speech he made against the land-revenue policy of Government under which a restricted tenure was created depriving cultivators of their power of alienating land. There was very strong opposition to the bill in the province and it was reflected in the Council by popular representatives headed by the late Sir Pherozeshah Mehta. The agitation against the measure was characterised by officials as a money-lender's agitation, which was of course far from being true and when an appeal to Government to postpone the further consideration of the bill in deference to the earnest request of the people failed, Messrs. Mehta, Gokhale and other non-official members left the Council Chamber as a protest against official obstinacy and indifference to popular opinion. In 1902 Mr. Gokhale filled Mr. Pherozeshah's place in the Supreme Legislative Council as the only man on whom the mantle of that great veteran could fittingly fall, and from that

Koviloor Acadamy

time till his death he continued to represent true public opinion in the highest Legislative Chamber in the land with ability, outspokenness and statesmanship, which, it is no exaggeration to say, have never been equalled. Criticism and especially able criticism of the policy and measures of Government has always been resented by officials and the Anglo-Indian press, and according to them the proper *role* of the exponents of public opinion in our Legislative Councils is to listen and acquiesce. But Mr. Pherozeshah had made his presence felt in the Viceroy's Council and a stouter champion of the people's cause and a more unsparing critic of the official class could not be found. His successor had to deal, on his advent into the Council, with such a masterful personality as Lord Curzon, and Mr. Gokhale soon showed that the cause of the public could not have been placed in more competent hands, and the Viceroy himself realized that he had to cross swords with an adversary whom it was not easy to overcome.

In 1902, having fulfilled his vow, Mr. Gokhale retired from the Life Membership of the D. E. Society and launched upon a new stage in his career. In the touching reply he gave to the farewell address presented to him by the students of the Fergusson College on

Koviloor Acadamy

the eve of his retirement, Mr. Gokhale spoke with extreme diffidence about his success in the new role he was assuming and compared himself to a man who, fascinated by the irresistible charms of the sea, trusted himself and his all to its waves and was overwhelmed by the pitiless billows. He went on to observe:

"Here I am with a settled position in this college and having for my colleagues, men with whom it is a pleasure and a privilege to work, and whose generosity in overlooking my many faults and magnifying any little services I may have rendered, has often touched me deeply. And yet, I am giving up all this to embark on the stormy and uncertain sea of public life. But I hear within me a voice which urges me to take this course, and I can only ask you to believe me when I say that it is purely from a sense of duty to the best interests of our country, that I am seeking this position of greater freedom but not necessarily of less responsiblity. Public life in this country has few rewards and many trials and discouragements. The prospect of work to be done is vast, and no one can say what is on the other side—how all this work may end. But one thing is clear. Those who feel in the matter as I do must devote themselves to the work in a spirit of hope and faith and seek only the satisfaction which comes of all disinterested exertions."

Mr. Gokhale's retirement was indeed a great loss to the D. E. Society, but what a gain has it been to the country at large! The frail and storm-tossed bark of which he spoke turned out to be a big ocean steamer successfully riding the waves of public life and taking India towards the harbour of her

Koviloor Acadamy

deeply cherished ideal. Mr. Gokhale's remarks quoted above, however, correctly represent the enormous difficulties which an Indian entering upon public life has to face in this country and the disappointment which falls to his lot.

It is superfluous to say that in the Imperial Legislative Council, of which he was one of the most distinguished members, Mr. Gokhale rendered invaluable services to the people and Government. He was a staunch advocate of financial, administrative and economic reform and consistently urged upon the attention of Government the necessity of taking measures to promote the moral and material development of the people of this country. Before the year 1909, when the reformed Councils came into existence, Hon'ble members of the legislatures had no right to move resolutions and all the criticism they had to offer and all the suggestions they had to make, had to be concentrated in their budget speeches. Mr. Gokhale's speeches in the Supreme Legislative Council in the pre-Reform period constitute a splendid literature which all those who want to study the development of our financial and material condition should make it a point to read, mark, and inwardly digest. They give a luminous exposition of the policy and measures of Government from year to year and bring out the hopes, the aspi-

Koviloor Acadamy

rations and needs of the people in a most instructive manner. Mr. Gokhale pleaded for a more liberal and sympathetic policy in the administration, for retrenchment and economy, for the spread of education among the masses and for the systematic promotion of their material prosperity. His budget speeches, therefore, make most enlightening and instructive reading and form, as it were, a text-book for a student of public questions in India.

In concluding his budget speech of 1903, he thus referred to the question of administrative reform :

"No one denies that the difficulties of the position are great, no one expects radical or far-reaching changes all in a day. What one regrets most, however, in the present system of administration is that it favours so largely a policy of mere drift. The actual work of administration is principally in the hands of the members of the Civil Service, who, taken as a body, are able and conscientious men; but none of them individually can command that prestige, which is so essential for inaugurating any large scheme of policy involving a departure from the established order of things. The administrators, on the other hand, who come out direct from England, command no doubt the necessary prestige, but their term of office being limited to five years, they have not the opportunity, even if they had the will, to deal in an effective and thorough-going manner with the deeper problems of the administration. The result is that there is an inveterate tendency to keep things merely going as though every one said to himself; 'This will last my time.' What the situation really demands is that a large and comprehensive scheme for the

Koviloor Acadamy

moral and material well-being of the people should be chalked out with patient care and foresight, and then it should be firmly and steadily adhered to and the progress made examined almost from year to year."

The continuous growth of military expenditure has been the subject of persistent criticism at the hands of Indian politicians and what lends point to the criticism is the galling consciousness of the people that they are not allowed to undertake the responsibilities of national defence by being enrolled as Volunteers or being admitted to higher posts in the Army. While public attention to this latter aspect of the question has now been attracted in India, it is interesting to note the appeal Mr. Gokhale made to Government in this behalf in his Budget Speech in 1904. He said:—

"My Lord, His Excellency the Commander-in-Chief addressed the other day a powerful appeal to Englishmen in India to come forward and enrol themselves as volunteers from a sense of public duty. May not the Government consider the desirability of permitting—aye, inviting—carefully selected classes from among the children of the soil to share in the responsibilities of national defence? Both sentimental and financial considerations demand the adoption of a policy of this kind; and unless this is done, the growing military expenditure of the country will in course of time absorb all available resources and cast its blighting shadow over the whole field of Indian administration."

In view of the great interest with which the

Koviloor Acadamy

subject of the Public Services in India is always invested, the views Mr. Gokhale expressed on the question in the Viceroy's Council fourteen years ago, cannot fail to be instructive. The irony of the galling situation was that while the sons of the soil were excluded from responsible posts in the public Service, the Viceroy was proclaiming that not only were the people of this country not justified in complaining of exclusion from high office, but that they were being treated with 'a liberality unexampled in the history of the world.' Unexampled liberality forsooth! In his Budget speech of 1905, Mr. Gokhale dealt with this question and observed that in spite of the Viceroy's speech and a Government Resolution magnifying the 'unexampled liberality,' the public mind remained unconvinced and that certain propositions in the Resolution had even created the unfortunate impression that it is no longer the intention of Government to adhere faithfully to the lines of policy laid down in the matter in the Parliamentary Statute of 1833 and the Proclamation of the Queen Empress in 1858. Having successfully disposed of the arguments advanced by Government to support their plea of 'unexampled liberality,' Mr. Gokhale went on to say:—

"My Lord, this question of appointment to high office is to us something more than a mere question

Koviloor Acadamy

of careers. When all positions of power and of official trust and responsibility are the virtual monopoly of a class, those who are outside that class are constantly weighted down with a sense of their inferior position, and the tallest of them have no option but to bend in order that the exigencies of the situation may be satisfied. Such a state of things, as a temporary arrangement, may be accepted as inevitable. As a permanent arrangement, it is impossible. This question thus is to us a question of national prestige and self-respect, and we feel that our future growth is bound up with a proper solution of it."

The hasty and ill-considered changes that were made in Higher Education also met with severe criticism at the hands of Mr. Gokhale. Among the many retrograde measures of the Curzonian regime the Indian Universities Bill was one. Its introduction created great distrust and indignation throughout the country. Mr. Gokhale, himself one of the class of the much abused and "discontended B.A.'s," felt that the bill was a veiled attempt to check the progress of higher education and put back the hands of the clock. At the first meeting at which the bill was introduced, Mr. Gokhale exposed the error of the policy which prompted the Viceroy to usher in his favourite measure. He said:—

Let not Government imagine that, unless the education imparted by Colleges is the highest which is at the present day possible, it is likely to prove useless and even pernicious; and secondly, let not the achievements of our graduates in the intellectual field be accepted as the sole, or even the most important test to determine the utility of this education. I think,

Koviloor Acadamy

my Lord—and this is a matter of deep conviction with me—that, in the present circumstances of India, *all* Western education is valuable and useful. If it is the highest that under the circumstances is possible, so much the better. But even if it is not the highest, it must not on that account be rejected. I believe the life of a people—whether in the political or social or industrial or intellectual field—is an organic whole and no striking progress in any particular field is to be looked for, unless there be room for the free movement of the energies of the people in all fields. To my mind, the greatest work of Western education in the present state of India is not so much the encouragement of learning as the liberation of the Indian mind from the thraldom of old-world ideas, and the assimilation of all that is highest and best in the life and thought and character of the West. For this purpose not only the highest but *all* Western education is useful. I think Englishmen should have more faith in the influence of their history and their literature. And whenever they are inclined to feel annoyed at the utterances of a discontented B.A., let them realize that he is but an accident of the present period of the transition. in India, and that they should no more lose faith in the results of Western education on this account than should my countrymen question the ultimate aim of British rule in this land, because not every Englishman who comes out realizes the true character of England's mission here.

The bill was passed and it soon became law, but the country was deeply grateful to Mr. Gokhale for his valiant fight.

Mr. Gokhale was about this time Joint Secretary of the National Congress along with Mr. D. E. Wacha. He was also very busy in collecting subscriptions for a memorial to the late Mr. Justice Ranade who had departed in

Koviloor Acadamy

1901. The city of Bombay, where Mr. Justice Ranade passed the last few years of his life, raised a memorial to him and even Madras had made an attempt to perpetuate his memory. But it was necessary that Poona, the centre and source of Mr. Ranade's activities and the place to which he was so deeply attached, should have a memorial of its own, every way worthy of the services rendered by the deceased to Maharashtra. Mr. Gokhale laboured hard for the purpose and the public response was satisfactory. The memorial has taken the form of the Ranade Economic Institute, which was formally opened by Sir George Clarke (now Lord Sydenham), the then Governor of Bombay. It was also about this time that the plans Mr. Gokhale had been maturing about the Servants of India Society, became ripe and the institution came into being in June 1905.*

In the latter part of this year Mr. Gokhale went to England on a political mission being deputed by the Bombay Presidency in accordance with a Congress resolution passed the previous year. Addressing the Fabian Society, London, he said, 'he had come from India in order to arouse the interest of the

* See page 914, "Speeches and Writings of G. K. Gokhale" Price Rs. 4. To Subscribers of the *Indian Review*, Rs. 3. G. A. Natesan & Co., Madras.

Koviloor Acadamy

people of England in the affairs of India.' He told his audience that 'they were on the eve of a General Election, and consequently their friends in India thought this a fitting opportunity to make a special appeal to the English democracy with a view to inducing them to take some kind of interest in the affairs of that dependency.' The value of this sort of missionary work to be done in England has not been properly appreciated by many people in this country. It would be silly to expect any tangible effects to flow immediately from missions to England, but we must understand how our cause suffers owing to British ignorance and indifference. Propaganda work entrusted to capable hands like those of Mr. Gokhale is, however, sure to attain success as far as success is possible in such matters. Mr. Gokhale carried out his mission with great vigour, putting his case before the British public in that lucid, free and masterly way which characterised him.

The strenuous work Mr. Gokhale had done in the course of the year 1905, here and in England, was crowned with the most arduous duties he was called upon to perform, despite his wishes to the contrary, as President of the Benares Session of the Congress. We call those duties arduous because the position of the President of the Congress, which even

Koviloor Acadamy

under normal conditions is one of great responsibility, was rendered extremely difficult that year owing to the deep and serious unrest which the autocratic regime of Lord Curzon, the 'prancing proconsul,' had created throughout the country. Mr. Gokhale had to pass scathing criticisms upon the unwise policy that ruler had pursued during his regime, scorning and trampling on public opinion and exasperating the people by his high-handed measures. This is the word-picture Mr. Gokhale painted of Lord Curzon :—

"The fact is that Lord Curzon came to India with certain fixed ideas. To him India was a country where the Englishman was to monopolize for all time all power and talk all the while of duty. The Indian's only business was to be governed, and it was a sacrilege on his part to have any other aspiration. In his scheme of things there was no room for the educated classes of the country; and having failed to amuse them for any length of time by an empty show of taking them into his confidence he proceeded in the end to repress them. Even in his last farewell speech at the Byculla Club in Bombay, India exists only as a scene of the Englishman's labours with the toiling millions of the country—eighty per cent. of the population—in the background. The remaining twenty per-cent., for aught they were worth, might as well be gently swept into the sea! . . Lord Curzon's highest ideal of statesmanship is efficiency of administration. He does not believe in what Mr. Gladstone used to call the principle of liberty as a factor of human progress. He has no sympathy with popular aspirations and when he finds them among a subject people, he thinks he is rendering their country a service by trying to put them down."

Koviloor Acadamy

The *Swadeshi* movement, which was the direct product of the anti-partition agitation, next claimed Mr. Gokhale's attention, and carefully analysing the economic condition of the country, he pointed out the difficulties, the duties and the responsibilities involved in the successful conduct of that movement. With a masterly hand he proceeded to paint a vivid picture of the general political situation in India and formulated in some detail the demands of the Congress and laid down a programme of political work. The time, he thought, was most propitious for making an effort to carry out the sort of programme he had sketched. In England, the Liberal Party had come into power after a long Conservative regime and a strong current had set in 'against that narrow and aggressive imperialism, which only the other day seemed to be carrying everything before it.' Mr. Morley's assumption of the Secretaryship of State for India, in particular, raised men's expectations to a high pitch and though he found himself unable to go against the current of conservative and reactionary influences, that philosopher-statesman's name is properly associated with the expansion of the Legislative Councils. How people's minds were swayed backwards and forwards by hope and fear on the eve of the Reform

Koviloor Acadamy

epoch, is seen from the following sentences from Mr. Gokhale's speech.

"And as regards the new Secretary of State for India, what shall I say? Large numbers of educated men in this country feel towards Mr. Morley as towards a Master, and the heart hopes and trembles, as it never hoped or trembled before. He, the reverent student of Burke, the disciple of Mill, the friend and biographer of Gladstone—will he courageously apply their principles and his own to the Government of this country, or will he too succumb to the influences of the India Office around him, and thus cast a cruel blight on hopes, which his own writings have done so much to foster?"

Mr. Gokhale's Budget Speech of 1906 was again a vigorous plea on behalf of retrenchment and economic and administrative reform. He bitterly complained of the lavish expenditure upon the Army and the utilization of the large annual surpluses for the construction of works which ought to be built out of borrowed funds.

'The saddest part of the whole thing,' he said, 'is that in spite of this superabundance of money in the Exchequer and the resultant growth of administrative expenditure, the most pressing needs of the country in regard to the moral and material advancement of the people have continued for the most part unattended to and no advantage of the financial position has been taken to inaugurate comprehensive schemes of State action for improving the condition of the masses.'

Mr. Gokhale then went on to indicate the lines along which reform was urgently needed, *viz.*, educational expansion, sanita-

Koviloor Acadamy

tion, relieving the burdens of the ryots and so forth. On April 14, 1906, Mr. Gokhale again left for England on a political mission to press for a redress of grievances and the concession of Council and other reforms. Behind him, in India, particularly in Bengal, things were going from bad to worse. The partition of that Province had caused a deep wound in the minds of the people and the blundering acts of the executive were most harsh and exasperating.

The harsh, unwise and short-sighted policy of Government aggravated the evil to such an extent, that a section of the population was swept off its feet. People became pessimistic and lost faith in constitutional political agitation. A boycott of British goods and of all Government institutions was preached and practised. A party of Extremists thus arose in the country consisting of men who saw no good in the Congress as it was then constituted. People who till then had done little constructive work and had given no promise of a capacity to do any, suddenly shot into fame and became self-constituted leaders. Their propaganda was practically anti-Congress. Their mock-heroic phrases caught the ear of a large section of the public and the fate of the Calcutta Congress hung in the balance. When reverence for authority

Koviloor Acadamy

age and experience had vanished and the new doctrines of so-called self-reliance and nationalism were gaining ground in the country, it is no wonder if a number of raw and inexperienced people fell victims to the infection of the movement.

The work of the responsible leaders of the political movement became very difficult and all progress seemed to be threatened. The charm of the personality of Mr. Dadabhai Naoroji, who was induced to preside over the Calcutta Congress, somehow staved off the disruption of that body. But the Extremists became every day more clamorous and framed a political programme of their own, which was at daggers drawn with the traditional aims and methods of the Congress. They wanted that body to adopt Swarajya or unrestricted Self-Government and a universal boycott as the main planks of its programme, and they seemed to be bent on thus mending, or ending, the Congress. Constructive work was not in their line and they all but succeeded in wrecking the Congress at Surat when they found they could not capture it. As a sincere and selfless patriot and a keen-eyed statesman, Mr. Gokhale was deeply pained by the way things were developing and with a view to explaining the real situation to his countrymen, he undertook in the early part

Koviloor Acadamy

of 1907 an extensive tour in the United Provinces and the Punjab, in the course of which he delivered speeches at various places and attempted to define and elucidate the work which educated Indians had to do for the uplift of their country.

We shall not recount the incidents of 1907 and 1908 which showed that the poisonous exotic of anarchism, which years of vigilance and determined action have not succeeded in wholly exterminating, had taken root in the Indian soil, that forces of violence were gaining strength and that new political doctrines subversive of all progress were being imbibed by the unwary, the inexperienced and the impressionable folk. The voice of reason, of true patriotism and of statesmanship was drowned in the frenzied clamours of the exponents of Extremism.

As it was, the unfortunate Surat incident left no choice to the responsible leaders of the Congress but to place it on a sound basis and to frame a constitution and rules for its guidance though this might keep out from that body several people who were once its adherents. Self-Government within the Empire was made the fundamental article of faith of the Congress, and it was under this constitution that the session was held at Madras in 1908. Thus the leaders displayed

Koviloor Acadamy

on this critical occasion rare courage and capacity for constructive work, and the even course of the Congress has continued to run smoothly. These were most anxious times for Mr. Gokhale who was consistently misrepresented and vilified by his detractors and yet who was manfully doing his onerous duty by his countrymen. The country was not yet pacified, the repressive policy of Government went on unabated and the high hopes entertained of the Morley regime seemed to be dashed to the ground. Nothing could have been more disappointing and disconcerting to Mr. Gokhale than the situation in the country, the persistence by Government in a policy which intensified the unrest among the people and the consequent block in the path of progress.

After urging, as usual, various financial, economic and administrative reforms, in his budget speech of 1907, Mr. Gokhale observed :

Since last year, the impression has prevailed that the Government has at last decided to move forward and that important concessions are contemplated. I earnestly trust that this impression is well-founded. I trust also that the proposed reforms, when announced, will be found to be substantial and conceived in a generous spirit. My Lord, it is of importance that there should be no unnecessary delay in this matter. The public mind is in a state of great tension, and unless the concessions are promptly announced and steps taken to give immediate effect to them, they will, I fear, lose half their efficacy and all their grace. The situa-

Koviloor Acadamy

tion is an anxious—almost critical one, and unless the highest statesmanship inspires the counsels of the Government, difficulties threaten to arise of which no man can foresee the end."

In the next year's Budget Speech also Mr. Gokhale referred to this point and appealed to Government to stem betimes the tide of unrest and impatience, which was fast spreading throughout the country and becoming stronger every day, by the adoption of a statesmanlike and conciliatory policy. Having dealt with the questions of the utilization of surpluses, of the causes and effects of the prevalent high prices, and having pointed out how disappointment and discontent were getting a firm hold of the mind of the young generation, Mr. Gokhale said :—

"My Lord, the Government will no doubt put down —indeed it must put down—all disorder with a firm hand. But what the situation really requires is not the policeman's baton or the soldier's bayonet, but the statesman's insight, wisdom and courage. The people must be enabled to feel that their interests are, if not the only consideration, at any rate, the main consideration, that weighs with the Government, and this can only be brought about by a radical change in the spirit of the administration. Whatever reforms are taken in hand, let them be dealt with frankly and generously. And My Lord, let not the words 'too late' be written on every one of them."

The reforms came at last, but though they carried our constitutional progress one step further, they did not give much satisfaction. Yet there they were and represented a move

Koviloor Acadamy

forward in the right direction. It was in this spirit that Mr. Gokhale wanted his countrymen to take the reforms, to make the best of them and to prepare for further advance. In his Budget Speech of 1909, that being the last year of the pre-Reform Councils regime, Mr. Gokhale offered a few observations of a general character, mainly reviewing the political situation in the country. He expressed his strong disapproval of the repressive policy of Government, which three months before had dictated the deportation of nine Bengalee gentlemen under an old Regulation of 1818. He then referred to certain features of the new reform scheme, which was being adversely criticised from different standpoints in the Indian, the Anglo-Indian and the British press. Mr. Gokhale felt it his obvious duty to express his countrymen's gratitude to Lord Minto and Lord Morley for the noble work they had done in introducing the reforms under conditions of extraordinary difficulty. He paid a handsome and well deserved tribute to both which is epitomised in the following two sentences in his Budget Speech:

"My Lord, I sincerely believe that your Lordship and Lord Morley have between you saved India from drifting towards what cannot be described by any other name than chaos. For, however strong a Government may be, repression never can put down the aspirations of a people and never will."

Koviloor Acadamy

In the meantime, in spite of the reforms secured by India through the initiative of the two liberal-minded statesmen, the course of crime and violence which had been adopted by a few political fanatics and anarchists, went on and made the position most anxious and embarrassing. In a speech delivered at Poona under the auspices of the Deccan Sabha, on 4th July, 1909, Mr. Gokhale expressed in the strongest terms the horror and indignation with which the dreadful news of the assassination of Sir William Curzon-Wyllie and Dr. Lalkaka by an Indian student in London had just been received in this country and emphatically denounced people who spread wild and nonsensical ideas about independence and whose noxious propaganda unsettled the minds of the young generation in the country. Seven days later he delivered another speech in which he dealt with the question of special representation on the Legislative Councils which had created an amount of soreness in the minds of a large section of the people of this country. He explained the special difficulties that surrounded the question of Moslem representation, but strongly opposed special treatment of any community as such. In October, 1914, Mr. Gokhale gave an address at the annual meeting of the Students' Brotherhood, Bombay, and while

Koviloor Acadamy

urging the necessity of our students studying political problems under proper guidance, warned them against the Extremist teaching which had become the bane of the country. From the commencement of the reformed councils epoch, Mr. Gokhale steadily availed himself fully of the new opportunities to move resolutions on important subjects and to criticise in an effective and helpful way the financial policy of the Government. Though the fat surpluses, which were a feature of the time of Lord Curzon, tended to diminish in later years, Finance Members showed great anxiety to budget for a surplus and expended the funds thus obtained on works which should have been provided for out of loans. Mr. Gokhale's position was perfectly sound, and it was that surpluses meant a higher level of taxation than was justified by the needs of the country and as the money represented by the surpluses came out of the pockets of the people, it should be devoted to reforms designed to ameliorate the condition of the people.

In his speech on the budget estimates for 1910-11, Mr. Gokhale took a comprehensive review of the financial situation and the steady rise of expenditure for the previous ten years, and suggested the necessity for an in-

Koviloor Acadamy

quiry into the growth of civil and military expenditure during that period.

So seriously heavy was the increase in public expenditure that Mr. Gokhale hammered at the question next year and moved a Resolution in the Legislative Council in January, 1911, recommending that Government should order a public inquiry by a mixed body of officials and non-officials into the causes which had led to the phenomenal rise.

'How large and how unprecedented,' he said, 'this growth of expenditure has been, may be seen from the fact that two years ago, of a sudden and without any warning, we came to a year of heavy deficit—the heaviest deficit that this country has known since the Mutiny. And last year the Hon'ble Member, as if to emphasise the gravity of the situation, felt himself driven to impose additional taxation to the tune of about a million and a quarter in a perfectly normal year, free from famine, war or any of those other disturbing circumstances which in our mind have been associated with increased taxation in the past.'

Mr. Gokhale's speech on this occasion is one of the finest expositions that have been given in the Council Chamber of the Indian financial policy, which has allowed an enormous growth of public expenditure, civil and military. His speech in connection with his proposal about an Opium Fund is equally illuminating and interesting. In fact, all his latter speeches on economic and financial questions make most instructive reading. He

Koviloor Acadamy

handles figures with an ease that even on the official side it is rare to meet with. He has an extraordinarily firm grasp of his subject, his insight is deep and clear, and his principles sound and unassailable. Mr. Gokhale's knowledge, his capacity and his grip of principles, were so wonderful that it would be no adequate compliment to him to say that he would have filled the place of the Indian Finance Minister with distinction. We are sure we shall not be charged with using the language of exaggeration if we observe that he would have made a successful Chancellor of the Exchequer in England. Referring to his absence, due to ill-health, Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson observed in 1913, that it had created a blank in the Council and that Hon'ble Members who had experience of previous Council meetings must think that that day they were playing Hamlet with the part of the Prince of Denmark left out.

By constantly pressing for retrenchment, economy and more liberal expenditure on schemes calculated to ameliorate the condition of the people and to promote their material and moral progress, Mr. Gokhale was able to make a strong impression on the policy of Government, thanks to the responsive and sympathetic attitude of the Finance Members, Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson, who presented

Kovilpoor Academy

his last budget in 1913. Before laying down his office, he had adopted some of the measures urged by Mr. Gokhale and large grants were made by the Supreme Government to Local Governments to enable them to carry out certain schemes of reform. Thus the finances of the Local Boards were strengthened by assignments made to Provincial Governments in the budget for 1913-14, and this was practically to meet the demand made in that behalf by Mr. Gokhale in the previous year. This was admitted in so many words by the Finance Member when he said that the 'seeds of policy' planted by Mr. Gokhale had come to 'quick maturity.' In replying, on behalf of Government, to Mr. Gokhale's speech introducing a Resolution on 13th March, 1912, recommending the appointment of a committee to inquire into the adequacy or otherwise of the resources at the disposal of Local Bodies, Sir Guy Fleetwood Wilson said:—

"Whenever Mr. Gokhale advocates a policy to which he attaches much importance, I am irresistibly reminded of the Indian juggler who sows a mango seed in a flower pot and covers it over with a cloth. In an extraordinarily brief space of time he removes the cloth and behold, there is a goodly mango tree in full bearing. So it is with Mr. Gokhale. He advocates a certain reform. We give him the mild answer which turneth away wrath, and we think we have before us an appreciable breathing time. But Mr. Gokhale has sown his little seed in his little flower

Koviloor Acadamy

pot; he has covered it over with his little cloth, and within an incredibly short space of time he removes his little cloth and presents to our astonished vision a tree bearing not only leaves, not only buds and flowers but a goodly crop of wholesome fruit."

In February of the same year Mr. Gokhale had moved his Resolution pressing for the creation of District Advisory Councils. This reform he urged for the purpose of securing a close association of the people with district officials in the administration of the country. The proposal was, of course, stoutly opposed by Government but Mr. Gokhale's resolution showed his anxiety to improve the administrative machinery at the bottom, where it came into direct and every-day contact with the mass of people. Ill-health and work in connection with the Public Services Commission did not allow Mr. Gokhale during 1914 to take part in the deliberations of the Supreme Legislative Council, and this was felt as a serious loss to that body and to the country generally.

In two important matters Mr. Gokhale rendered invaluable service to his country, and they were his advocacy of the introduction of free and compulsory elementary education, and his espousal of the just cause of Indians in South Africa. As the reader must have seen, the expansion of mass education was always one of the objects he had at

Koviloor Acadamy

heart. In March, 1910, he placed the following Resolution before the Supreme Council :—

"That this Council recommends that a beginning should be made in the direction of making elementary education free and compulsory throughout the country, and that a mixed Commission of officials and non-officials be appointed at an early date to frame definite proposals."

Speaking on this Resolution, Mr. Gokhale made out a strong case in favour of his proposal, but he had to content himself with an assurance from Government that the matter of the expansion of primary education would receive their serious and sympathetic consideration. Next year he introduced his Elementary Education Bill, which was warmly supported by people throughout the country. It was a very cautious measure, and Mr. Gokhale had been very careful in framing the Bill to meet the various difficulties he was sure to encounter in making it acceptable to Government and different classes of people concerned. The measure did not try to achieve the impossible by seeking to introduce free and compulsory education universally and all at once, but provided for gradual yet definite expansion. He introduced the Bill in a powerful speech full of convincing facts, figures and arguments.

My Lord, one great need of the situation, which I have ventured again and again to point out in this Council for several years past, is that the Government

Koviloor Acadamy

should enable us to feel that, though largely foreign in personnel, it is national in spirit and sentiment; and this it can only do by undertaking towards the people of India all those responsibilities, which national Governments in other countries undertake towards their people. We too, in our turn, must accept the Government as a national Government, giving it that sense of security which national Governments are entitled to claim, and utilising the peace and order, which it has established, for the moral and material advancement of our people. And of all the great national tasks which lie before the country, and in which the Government and the people can co-operate to the advantage of both, none is greater than this task of promoting the universal diffusion of education in the land, bringing by its means a ray of light, a touch of refinement, a glow of hope into lives that sadly need them all. The work, I have already said, is bound to be slow, but that only means that it must be taken in hand at once. If a beginning is made without further delay, if both the Government and the people persevere with the task in the right spirit, the whole problem may be solved before another generation rises to take our place. If this happens, the next generation will enter upon its own special work with a strength which will be its own security of success. As for us, it will be enough to have laboured for such an end—laboured even when the end is not in sight. For, my Lord, I think there is not only profound humility but also profound wisdom in the faith which says :—

"I do not ask to see the distant scene :
One step's enough for me."

There was an animated debate on the Bill, and Mr. Gokhale had no reason to be dissatisfied with the reception which it met with at the hands of the members of the Council. He also expressed his gratitude to the Hon'ble

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Mr. Butler and to the Government for the most sympathetic attitude they had adopted towards the Bill, the motion to introduce which was put and agreed to.

The country was enthusiastically in favour of the Bill. Meetings held in various parts accorded their support to the measure and thus strengthened Mr. Gokhale's hands. Mr. Gokhale himself was active and spoke in Calcutta and elsewhere on the question of compulsory education, removed misunderstandings, tried to conciliate opponents and reassure waverers. He was thus encouraged to move in the Viceregal Council on 18th March, 1912, that the Bill to make better provision for the expansion of elementary education be referred to a Select Committee. On this occasion he analysed the opinions recorded upon his Bill by Local Governments, Municipalities, District Boards, and officials, European and Indian, and attempted to meet the objections which some of them had raised.

Mr. Gokhale then went on to criticise the unfavourable opinions that had been expressed in the Council on his motion, and his running commentary makes interesting reading, especially remarks about the unexpected and sudden conversion to official views and methods of the Hon'ble Mr. Dadabhoy. But all his figures, his reasoning and his arguments

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were of no avail. A stone wall of opposition had been erected by the Provincial Governments against the passage of the Bill, and the Government of India, had it been inclined to accept Mr. Gokhale's motion, was utterly helpless. The motion, to the disappointment of the whole country, was negatived by a majority of 75 votes. Yet one effect of the agitation in favour of compulsory education has been that the wheels of the Government machinery have begun to move a little more speedily. But the people cannot be satisfied with this: they want primary education made compulsory and free and definite schemes to be framed for the purpose. In short, public opinion wants an Education Act of the type proposed by Mr. Gokhale, to whom the country is indebted for the splendid work he did in that cause.

This is not the place for enlarging upon the South African problem. The grievances of Indian settlers in South Africa, their oppressive treatment at the hands of the white population, the attitude adopted by the Union Government and the utter helplessness and apathy of the Imperial Government in the matter, are all too well-known now in this country to require mention here. From the very first Mr. Gokhale felt most deeply for his countrymen and countrywomen in South

Koviloor Acadamy

Africa and did what he could to help them. Seeing that the very system of indentured labour was immoral and degrading, Mr. Gokhale moved a Resolution in the Viceregal Council on 4th March, 1912, recommending that the necessary steps should be taken to prohibit the recruitment of Indian labourers under contract of indenture, whether for employment at home or in any British Colony. Two years before such recruitment for Natal had been stopped by law, but Government were not prepared for the prohibition suggested by Mr. Gokhale. The position in South Africa, had in the meantime, gone from bad to worse, and Mr. Gokhale decided to visit that country to study the question on the spot and collect facts. But while in London, it was suggested to him by high authorities that he might seek an opportunity to discuss the Indian question personally with the ministers in South Africa. It is needless to say, Mr. Gokhale utilized the opportunity to the full but the problem bristled with difficulties of a serious nature, and the task of the peacemaker is proverbially thankless. He was most warmly received by his countrymen wherever he went, was entertained and presented with numerous loving and grateful addresses, which may now be seen adorning the walls of the Associates'

Koviloor Acadamy

room in the Servants of India Society's Home in Poona. Mr. Gokhale's position in South Africa was one of extreme delicacy and responsibility. With a full sense of this he tried to do what he could to bring the Union ministers and the white population to look at the position of the Indians in the proper perspective. Unfortunately Mr. Gokhale's attitude was misunderstood in certain quarters in India and was subjected to hostile criticism. Addressing a crowded public meeting in the Bombay Town Hall on 14th December, 1912, on his return from South Africa, he completely answered this criticism by pointing out how those who passed it did not show any real grasp of the problem. The supreme question for the Indian community in South Africa, he said, was not to urge a policy of the open door for more Indians to come there, as certain ill-informed critics thought, but to secure such an amelioration of the conditions under which they lived that their lot might become more bearable, and they might have opportunities of growing into an important part of a self-governing community. If he had stood out for the open door, the cause of the Indian community could not have been furthered in any way. His position was the position of Mr. Gandhi who certainly understood and cared for the

Koviloor Acadamy

interests of Indians in South Africa better than their countrymen out here. The tribute Mr. Gokhale paid to Mr. Gandhi is most touching and inspiring. He said:—

"In all my life I have known only two men who have affected me spiritually in the manner that Mr. Gandhi does—our great patriarch, Mr. Dadabhoy Naoroji and my late master, Mr. Ranade—men before whom not only are we ashamed of doing anything unworthy, but in whose presence our very minds are afraid of thinking anything that is unworthy. The Indian cause in South Africa has really been built up by Mr. Gandhi. Without self and without stain, he has fought his great fight for this country during a period now of twenty years, and India owes an immense debt of gratitude to him."

While Mr. Gokhale was devoting his attention to the political and educational advancement of his country he did not forget the great need there was for its social and industrial regeneration. In regard to social reform his attitude was definite and pronounced. He was often grieved to think of the differences of caste and creed which divided our countrymen, and he lost no opportunity in pleading for the eradication of these distinctions. The wretched condition of the depressed classes made a profound impression on him and on many occasions he was intensely distressed over their miserable lot. He said on one occasion, "it is so deeply deplorable that it constitutes a grave blot on

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our social arrangements," and it is "deeply revolting to our sense of justice."

But all too suddenly has the noble career come to an end. The strenuous work in which Mr. Gokhale had been engaged began to tell upon his health. The South African tour and the work on the Public Service Commission had almost worn out his physical frame though his spirit was as untiring and fresh as ever. On the evening of Thursday the 18th Feb., 1915, the papers announced the telegraphic message that the Hon. Mr. Gokhale had been suddenly taken ill with cardiac asthma and that he had to cancel his trip to Delhi to attend the meeting of the Imperial Legislative Council. The morning dawned with the news that he had passed away. At once there spread a terrible gloom over the country from which it has not yet recovered fully. Gokhale was cremated in his own native city, where men of all parties met and expressed their most deep felt sorrow at his untimely death. The grief was not felt in India alone. England too and the Colonies testified to their sorrow at the death of this great Indian. From all quarters of the Empire, from the King, from Secretaries of State, from Viceroys, from Provincial Governors and the Ruling Chiefs, poured in messages of condolence to the bereaved family.

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Meetings were held in India and in England to offer men's sorrowful tribute to the departed statesman. Bombay and Madras voted for permanent memorials in the form of statues, while All India was eager to strengthen The Servants of India Society by subscribing liberally towards its upkeep.

All through his strenuous life Mr. Gokhale thought and spoke on the political destiny of India, and he seldom failed to impress on his countrymen the need for sustained effort. Mr. Gokhale used to say that we must " muse by day and dream by night " of the future of our motherland and he practised his precept literally. For almost the last act of Mr. Gokhale was to frame a scheme of post-war reforms for India. This document now known as Mr. Gokhale's last political testament was published in August 1917 by H. H. the Aga Khan.

Within the short span of life allotted to him he has achieved so much that it is difficult to cite the example of another Indian to compare him with. " A graduate at eighteen, Professor at twenty, Editor of a journal like the Quarterly of the Poona Sarvajanic Sabha at twenty-one, Secretary of the Provincial Conference at twenty-five, Secretary of the National Congress at twenty-nine, leading

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witness before a most important Royal Commission at thirtyone, Provincial Legislator at thiry-four, Imperial Legislator at thirty-six, President of the National Congress at thirty-nine, National Envoy to the Imperial Government and founder of institutions at forty"—what a truly marvellous and brilliant career has it been and how mournful it is to think that a life of such "singular gloriousness" had been so soon cut short! We feel "that a sudden darkness has fallen upon our lives." We cannot resist the thought that he was "a man whose death would leave humanity the poorer in any age and in any part of the world." An embodiment of public spirit and self-sacrifice, "without self and without stain," he sacrificed himself at the altar of the motherland. His strong sense of duty, his devotion to his *guru*, his disinterested pursuit of patriotic ends caring for neither wealth nor station, his sweet reasonableness and transparent sincerity, his singleness of purpose, his mastery of detail and lucidity and cogency of argument, and, above all, his saintly character—these will make his name for ever remembered by all lovers of India. Mr. Gokhale often impressed it on his countrymen that "public life must be spiritualised." And he lived the life he preached.

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We have lost the outstanding figure in the great transition stage of modern India; a man whose abilities brought him to the forefront, and whose sense of right forced him into controversies of which we have not yet seen the end. But at this moment the dominant feeling among all who were brought into contact with him is, I think, that the value of a life and personality such as his—a record of single-minded devotion to an unselfish ideal and of ceaseless labour in its service over an almost unlimited field of activity—stand above and apart from all controversy. * * * One of the many remarkable characteristics of Mr. Gokhale was the degree to which he was able to combine enthusiasm for reform with a patient industry not too often found in close association with the first quality. But he never allowed his idealism and his infinite capacity for taking pains to interfere with one another; rather, they both served as a joint inspiration to the work he set before him. The result was that, whether one agreed or disagreed with him, he gave a sense of practicalness in his dealings which seemed to sweep away half the difficulties at the outset. * * * He impressed one as being among the most candid and unassuming of men and he was equally ready to give or to take advice where it seemed most serviceable. His mind possessed the qualities ascribed to statesmanship without overlosing the fire of its enthusiasms or its warm human interests. We feel that his loss touches deeply not only India but the Empire and the whole world of men whose thoughts move in harmony, whether they know it or not, with the spirit of the brotherhood of "The Servants of India." *From a Speech by the Rt. Hon. Mr. E. S. Montagu.*

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